

VZCZCXRO3084  
OO RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHDBU RUEHLH RUEHPW  
DE RUEHNE #2911 1731110  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
O 221110Z JUN 07  
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6443  
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 6333  
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 2201  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 5124  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUEIDN/DNI WASHINGTON DC  
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 4932  
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 7055  
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI  
RHMFISS/HQ USSOCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 002911

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/INS, DRL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/21/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [IN](#)

SUBJECT: PATIL PITCHES ONE TO THE PRESIDENT

REF: NEW DELHI 2865

Classified By: PolCouns Ted Osius for reasons 1.4 (B,D)

11. (U) On June 20, her last day as Governor of Rajasthan, UPA Presidential hopeful Prathiba Patil forwarded the state's controversial anti-conversion bill to President Adbul Kalam for legal review and guidance on its constitutional merits. Governors have the option to send state legislation to the President for legal review if they believe it would not pass a constitutional test. The bill, which passed the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led Rajasthan State Assembly on May 7, 2006 has lived a tumultuous existence in Rajasthan. Initially, Patil refused to sign the bill into law and sent it back to the Assembly with objections and suggestions for amendments. The legislators, however, refused to change the bill and returned it to her in mid-May 2007. Until today, Patil sat on the bill, remarking that it could "have an adverse impact on the secular credentials of the nation and state."

#### Laws Restricting Religious Conversions

12. (U) Five states have already passed laws restricting religious conversions: Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh, and Arunachal Pradesh. In Rajasthan, legislation has been pending since 2005. The Rajasthan bill would punish those who carry out conversion through coercion of financial inducement with up to five years in prison and a fine of \$1250 (Rs. 50,000). The bill also bans religious organizations engaged in forced conversion.

#### Comment: Strengthening Her Secular Credentials

13. (C) During Patil's tenure as Rajasthan's Governor, she vocally expressed her concern with the legislation criminalizing conversions, stipulating that such a bill violated secularism as guaranteed under the Indian Constitution. Not knowing who will occupy the Governor's office after her, Patil seems to have pitched the legislation

to the President's office to buy more time. There is little chance that Kalam's legal team will complete its review of the bill before the end of his term, so Patil may have punted the bill from her desk as Governor to her desk as President. If elected as the new President, Patil could sit on the bill for the duration of her term (five years) and Rajasthan would have little option but to acquiesce. Political pundits speculated that Patil made this move to fend off criticisms lobbed at her for alleged "communal" comments she made regarding the origins of purdah in India (reftel). Regardless of her motivation, this action will help solidify her base among secularist electoral voters, while neutralizing the negative impact of her comments regarding Muslim women and purdah. End Comment.

MULFORD